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SUBJECT: ISCI/BADR AND DA'WA: IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES  
IN SOUTH-CENTRAL IRAQ?

REF: BAGHDAD 1283

Classified By: Senior Advisor Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Senior Advisor Gray's meetings with top Da'wa and ISCI/Badr officials in Hillah, held May 11, displayed the wide gulf between these parties in the province and throughout the south-central region. Prime Minister Maliki's representative in Hillah left open the door for ISCI to realign with Da'wa at the national level -- but only as a decidedly junior partner. He also said that, after the eventual death of ISCI leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the Prime Minister and others believe it would be better if ISCI were run by a five-man central committee rather than by Amar al-Hakim. ISCI/Badr leaders tried to downplay differences with Da'wa, but took a hard line against the proposed reconciliation of Ba'athists and Sunni combatants. ISCI is in a stronger position in some provinces further south, so the rancor in the al-Furat region may not reflect the broader national ISCI-Da'wa relationship. End summary.

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Da'wa view  
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¶2. (C) After assuming a commanding position in several south-central (al-Furat) provinces formerly run by ISCI/Badr -- including Hillah, Diwaniyah, Dhi Qar and Najaf -- Da'wa is attempting to dictate terms to its former partners. Abu Ahmed al-Basri, Maliki's representative in Hillah, told Senior Advisor Gordon Gray on May 11 that talks between Da'wa and ISCI about national partnership have started again, but said that ISCI will have to accept a lesser role in a coalition that Maliki intends to be cross-sectarian -- including Sunni Arabs and Shi'a Kurds. Basri was concerned that Badr would not accept this, and offered to forward us a list of assassinations or attempted assassinations carried out recently by Badr (but did not specify any in the meeting). He believes that ISCI politicians were slowly coming to terms with their loss in the provincial elections and their need for cooperation. In Hillah, ISCI boycotted the first Provincial Council (PC) meeting and partially boycotted the second, but two ISCI members actually voted with Da'wa in the most recent meeting. ISCI/Badr similarly boycotted the first PC meetings in Diwaniyah Province but have slowly started to engage.

¶3. (C) Basri believed that it would be difficult for any political leaders to work closely with ISCI/Badr in the short-run, given the fragile health of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and questions of secession. (Hakim, he thought, would likely live no longer than one more month, a prediction consistent with reports we have received in Baghdad.) According to Basri, neither ISCI's leading figures nor Iran is comfortable with the idea of Amar al-Hakim as supreme leader of ISCI, and would prefer that ISCI be led by a de

facto politburo including Adel Abdel al-Mehdi, Humam al-Hamoudi, Jalal al-Din as-Saghir, Bayan Jabr, and Hadi al-Ameri. Interestingly, Basri said that the Prime Minister would also be more comfortable with ISCI led by a central committee, albeit for different reasons and with perhaps a slightly different makeup.

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ISCI/Badr View  
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14. (C) Dr. Hafez al-Yassiri, Hakim's representative in Hillah, downplayed differences between ISCI and Da'wa, but took exception to many of the Prime Minister's decisions. Yassiri claimed that recent Sunni detainee releases were directly responsible for increased violence in Baghdad and elsewhere, saying that detention had turned even the innocent into hardened insurgents. Yassiri was joined by Badr provincial leaders Abu Ahmed al-Taie and Hassan Hamza, QBadr provincial leaders Abu Ahmed al-Taie and Hassan Hamza, who rejected any reconciliation of Ba'athists, Sunni former combatants, or Sadrists. Hamza accused Maliki of adopting the "Arab nationalist ideology" of Saddam Hussein. The Badr leaders were mostly in the meeting to pressure us to ask Coalition Forces (CF) to return to them weapons seized in a raid late last year. Al-Taie argued that they Badr has never attacked CF and claimed to have stopped Sadrist demonstrations and other activities recently.

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A South-Central Phenomenon?  
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15. (C) Tensions between ISCI/Badr and Da'wa are especially strong in the al-Furat region, given both the complete exclusion of ISCI/Badr from provincial executive positions and the expected removal of Badr-affiliated leaders from top Iraqi Police slots. While Gray met with provincial leaders in Diwaniyah on May 12, the Badr-aligned Diwaniyah Provincial Director of Police was in Baghdad -- reportedly making the case to Maliki and the Interior Ministry to save his job. These tensions have, however, thus far resulted in little if any proven violence between the two parties. The stronger role of ISCI in other provinces may play a healthful mitigating role. In Wasit and Muthanna, ISCI was able to flip disaffected State of Law/Da'wa members and take a majority position on the PC. In Maysan, ISCI and Da'wa are actually working quite well in coalition together. In Basra, Da'wa gave ISCI a secondary executive position to ensure its quiescence. It is hard to know whether the more balanced power relations in other areas will ease tensions in south-central Iraq. As Salman Taha Nassir al-Zargani, the new Maliki-chosen Governor of Hillah told Gray, "ISCI/Badr have promised us they will cooperate in the political process. In reality, this could change tomorrow."  
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